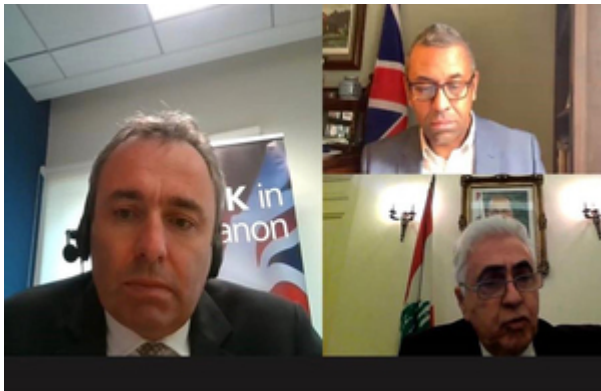


Cleverly ends visit to Lebanon: Economic reforms a must

World news story

UK Minister James Cleverly for the Middle East: Lebanon can have a bright future, but it must take urgent and drastic action to avoid economic catastrophe.



UK Minister for Middle East Cleverly with Ambassador Chris Rampling and Lebanese Foreign Minister Hitti

UK Minister for the Middle East James Cleverly held a virtual visit to Lebanon, where he discussed shared economic and security goals.

The Minister heard how the coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis is impacting the livelihoods of the Lebanese people, and how UK aid is supporting the most vulnerable.

The visit was an opportunity to see first-hand how the UK's longstanding partnership with Lebanon is implemented through the education, security, humanitarian sectors, and creating economic opportunities that totalled over \$200 million in 2019. Minister Cleverly highlighted the UK's leading role in finding a coronavirus vaccine, following the Global Vaccine Summit in June, raising \$8.8 billion to support the global fight against the virus. The UK's response also saw over \$2 million provided to help tackle coronavirus in Lebanon.

Speaking about the visit, Minister Cleverly said:

I was deeply impressed by the passion and drive of the Lebanese people I met. I am confident that this country can have a bright future, but it must take urgent and drastic action now to avoid economic catastrophe.

The UK is helping to tackle coronavirus in the country, which in turn will help stop future waves of the disease. This pandemic has already caused the death of so many around the world, but together we can stop it. No one is safe until we are all safe.

During his day-long virtual visit, Minister Cleverly met Prime Minister Hassan Diab and Foreign Minister Hitti to underline the seriousness of the economic situation and the consequences if no progress is made. Minister Cleverly also highlighted the importance of Lebanon's disassociation policy.

At a briefing on the UK border security project – which is helping to keep Lebanese borders safe – he heard from Lebanese Army officers how UK support is playing a key role in bolstering regional security.

With partners from various UK-initiated programmes, Minister Cleverly heard about the humanitarian and education-related challenges across Lebanon and how UK Aid is supporting vulnerable and host communities. Joined by British Council's Young Mediterranean Voices' from various regions, Minister Cleverly participated in a lively debate on education and future opportunities for young Lebanese people. In a roundtable discussion with independent experts, he heard about the challenges facing Lebanon's economy and the road to recovery. The session included videos from beneficiaries and partners who shared their personal stories on how the economic crisis is affecting them.

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